



Michael A. Spera  
Chief of Police

(5) (S)

**TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK  
DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES**

225 Main Street • Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475

---

**Testimony of  
Michael A. Spera  
President, Connecticut Emergency Management Association  
Chief of Police, Town of Old Saybrook**

**Before the  
State of Connecticut  
Public Safety and Security Committee  
regarding SB No. 1016 and SB No. 1017**

The Connecticut Emergency Management Association represents the interests of each municipal emergency management director in the State of Connecticut. Emergency Management Directors are responsible for the creation and maintenance of emergency operations plans and contingency planning in their respective communities. They are true partners in public safety and play a vital role on any local, regional, or state public safety leadership team.

As the Governor's consolidation plan is put into place on July 1, 2011 – State Government as we know it will change. Hopefully, services will be streamlined and costs will be reduced. The Connecticut Emergency Management Association shares Governor Malloy's commitment to changing the way we do business in Connecticut; however, we feel strongly about maintaining an organizational infrastructure that protects our residents and provides first responders with the training and the tools to properly perform their duties.

While I do not disagree with the Governor that the State public safety community can and should become more cost effective, I disagree with the manner in which the proposed bill suggests that we change the State's public safety structure as it will have a negative affect it will have on our local first responder community.

The proposed bill does not represent the ideas of the first responder community's leadership, leaves gaping holes in the operation of vital services, and does not address the reform that is truly needed to streamline services, improve deliverables, and save tax payer dollars. In these changing times, the last thing State Government should do is disrupt the very back bone of the systems that keep us safe and secure and provide services during times of crisis.

Emergency Management and Homeland Security was a dysfunctional disgrace many years ago until you and your colleagues fixed the problem. You, through a legislative change and input from local public safety professionals, created a new state agency, the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. You created a civilian oversight committee to provide transparency of the exchange

of federal grant dollars and outlined a mission for the new agency to improve the communication and coordination among public safety assets on the local, regional and state level. You created a winning agency that has demonstrated time and time again, during crisis and times of tranquility, that a coordinated, systematic, and independent approach to managing crisis, information sharing, and recovery from disaster truly benefits municipalities and most importantly our citizens. The agency that you created has helped our State and our local partners financially as well. Whether it is aggressively pursuing federal funds to support state and local prevention activities, acquiring emergency rescue equipment owned by regions rather than single municipalities, or seeking federal reimbursements following severe weather events to assist our local communities recover financially, this agency, the State Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, has truly become the light in the storm.

As State Government changes on July 1, 2011 the current public safety structure should not. With many agencies in flux, learning new roles, and implementing sweeping change, we should insist that public safety remain intact, until such time that educated, bold, sweeping reform can take place.

As a public safety community we have but one place to turn to seek assistance, and it is you, this prestigious subcommittee. You represent us. I ask that members of this prestigious committee introduce a bill today that will establish a blue ribbon commission comprised of the current presidents of the Joint Fire Council, The Connecticut Emergency Management Association, the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, the Police Officer Standards and Training Council and The Connecticut Fire Academy, Citizens Corps, and the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board to study, recommend and implement the way Public Safety is instructed, supervised, and regulated in the State of Connecticut. Our task would be to deliver a comprehensive report to the Public Safety Committee one year from today that would recommend sweeping changes to our State's public safety system with an emphasis on regulatory reform, introducing a more common sense approach to the way public safety business is performed at a state level, modernizing practices, consolidation of efforts, the elimination of duplicate services, the generation of new revenues, and most importantly enhancing services while reducing costs.

For this new commission to be successful this proposed Bill would also have to "freeze frame" today's practices. This would include no changes to any State public safety agency or State Department until the commission provides its recommendations one year from today. In essence, delay changes to the way we do public safety business today on the state level for one year, to allow for a more comprehensive, bold, operationally sound, and global approach to public safety reform.

All of you go home at night and trust your local police, fire, and EMS chiefs and your local emergency management directors to keep you and your loved ones safe. Why would we change the system that regulates their activity, and supports their efforts without their input? Please join me in staying the Governor's proposal to consolidate the State Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the Department of Public Safety, Consolidating the Police and Fire Academies into a new state agency, and making any change in the leaders of these organizations until your newly proposed blue ribbon commission on public safety reform has had the opportunity to review current practices and recommend bold, positive enhancements that will save Connecticut Tax Payers Money and reduce State costs.

The bottom line is if there has to be a change, and we all agree that there should be, let's let the change come from the very people who know about the system, have earned leadership roles in the system, and consistently strive to improve it.